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NEW YORK IS NO MORE! IN ITS PLACE STANDS NUEVA YORK, A TOWERING METROPOLIS FILLED WITH NEW INCARNATIONS OF THE HEROES OF THE PAST! TAKING ON THE MANTLES OF SUCH HEROES AS CAPTAIN AMERICA, IRON MAN, AND HAWKEYE, THESE NEW AVENGERS FIGHT FOR TRUTH, JUSTICE, AND MEGACORPORATIONS LIKE ALCHEMAX. THIS IS

SECRET WARS 2099

THE MULTIVERSE WAS DESTROYED! THE HEROES OF EARTH-616 AND EARTH-1610 WERE POWERLESS TO SAVE IT! NOW ALL THAT REMAINS IS BATTLEWORLD: A MASSIVE PATCHWORK PLANET COMPOSED OF THE FRAGMENTS OF WORLDS THAT NO LONGER EXIST, MAINTAINED BY THE IRON WILL OF ITS GOD AND MASTER, VICTOR VON DOOM! EACH REGION IS A DOMAIN UNTO ITSELF!

IN ONE SUCH DOMAIN, IN A FUTURISTIC METROPOLIS CALLED NUEVA YORK, THE AVENGERS ARE OWNED AND OPERATED BY ALCHEMAX, A MASSIVE CORPORATION THAT CONTROLS SUPER-HUMAN ACTIVITY. SOMEONE HAS TARGETED THEM, HOWEVER, AND CAPTAIN AMERICA WAS NEARLY ASSASSINATED IN HER HOME. ONE MAN, MARTIN HARGOOD, KNOWS WHY. THE AVENGERS TRACKED HIM DOWN, BUT CROSSED PATHS WITH THE DEFENDERS, A GROUP OF SUPERHUMANS OPERATING WITHOUT ALCHEMAX'S AUTHORIZATION.

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MARTIN HARGOOD.
WANTED IN CONNECTION WITH AN ATTEMPT ON CAPTAIN AMERICA'S LIFE.
WHAT THE--
THE "DEFENDERS"? WEIRD NAME. WHAT ARE YOU DEFENDING, EXACTLY?
DOWNTOWN. FROM VARIOUS NASTY THREATS.
WHICH WE'RE QUITE SURE YOU DEFINITELY ARE NOT.
I AIN'T SURE OF THAT AT ALL.
THE AVENGERS.
HAWKEYE, IRON MAN, HERCULES, CAPTAIN AMERICA, AND BLACK WIDOW.
THE DEFENDERS.
DOCTOR STRANGE, THE HULK, AND SILVER SURFER.
LOOK...WE'RE OBVIOUSLY ALL INTERESTED IN MARTIN HARGOOD. WE CAN CERTAINLY SET ASIDE WHATEVER DIFFERENCES WE MAY HAVE AND FOCUS ON HIM.
GOTTA GET OUTTA HERE!
WHERE DO YOU THINK YOU'RE GOING, HARGOOD?
SHOCK!

SO... IT'S GOING TO BE THAT WAY, IS IT? YOU'LL NEVER STOP ME!
YOU HAVE THE INTEREST OF OUR COMPATRIOTS. SO WE SUGGEST THAT YOU SURRENDER AND RETURN TO--
I HAVE NEVER BEEN MUCH FOR SURRENDERING.
SO, WHOEVER YOU ARE, I SUGGEST YOU GET OUT OF MY WAY!
FWAAAZOWWWW
WHAT WAS THAT?
WHERE'S HARGOOD?
I THOUGHT YOU WERE WATCHING HIM!
PERFECT. THAT'S JUST GREAT.
HE WILL NOT GET FAR.

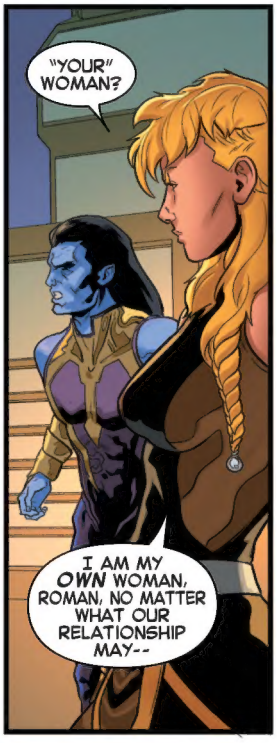
OUT OF MY WAY, I SAID!
YOU DARE ASSAULT ME? YOU SLUG!
EEEYAARRHHH!
YOU HAVE NOT EARNED THE PRIVILEGE!
AH.
CAPTAIN, THIS IS THE REST OF MY TEAM.
VINDER
YOUR VIRTUAL PART

MY TEAM. YOU SERVE BESIDE ME.
THIS IS THE SUB-MARINER. I AM VALKYRIE.
AND YOU ARE--?

A VALKYRIE? A TRUE DAUGHTER OF ODIN?!
ONE SIDE!
HERC, FOR GOD'S SAKE...
FOR MY SAKE INDEED.

I AM HERCULES. PRINCE OF POWER. SON OF ZEUS.
RELEASE HER HAND, GODLING.
I AM NOT ADDRESSING YOU, BLUE ONE, BUT THIS CHARMING--

SHE IS MY WOMAN, GODLING. I WILL THANK YOU TO STOP SPEAKING TO HER.


"YOUR" WOMAN?
I AM MY OWN WOMAN, ROMAN, NO MATTER WHAT OUR RELATIONSHIP MAY--

WAAAAM
UNNNFFFF!
I'M SORRY. YOU WERE SAYING?

KRUUNK
ALCHEMAX
PERFECT.
YOU WANT MORE, GODLING?
AYE, I DO! BUT I MUCH DOUBT YOU ARE THE ONE TO PROVIDE IT!
IN THE NAME OF ZEUS, HAVE AT THEE!
IMPERIUS REX!

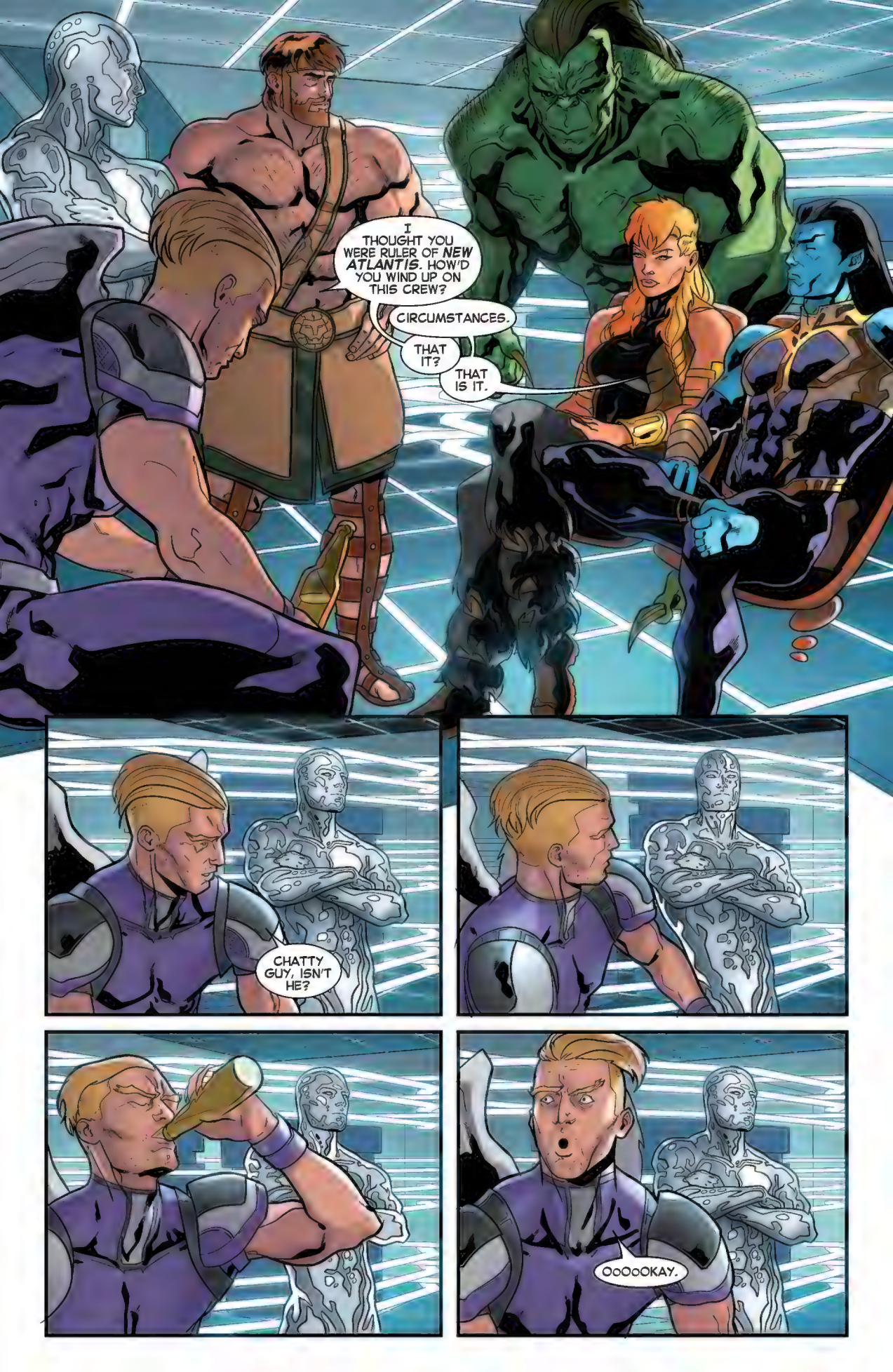
WHAT--?
WHO DARES?
ENOUGH.
THERE IS NO REASON FOR THIS BATTLE.
HERCULES, I AM SURE YOU CONSIDERED YOUR APPROACH SUAVE, BUT IT WAS OAFISH.
ROMAN, YOU NEED TO HAVE MORE CONFIDENCE IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH BRUNHILDE.
APOLOGIZE TO EACH OTHER.
NEVER!
HOW DARE YOU SEEK TO ISSUE ORDERS TO A--!
NOW.
UNNNHHHH!
URKHH!
Sorry.
Apologies.

OOFF!
YOU'RE AN IDIOT, YOU KNOW THAT?
IT HAS BEEN BROUGHT TO MY ATTENTION.
WHAT DO WE DO WITH THIS GUY? SHOULD I JUST SLIT HIS THROAT?
HARDLY. FOR ONE THING, WE NEED HIM TO ANSWER OUR QUESTIONS.
I'M AFRAID HE'S OUR PRISONER, ACTUALLY. WE HAVE IT ON RELIABLE AUTHORITY THAT HE'S INVOLVED WITH MYSTIC ELEMENTS THAT COULD PROVE GLOBALLY DESTRUCTIVE.
REALLY? WELL, IT SO HAPPENS HE MAY BE CONNECTED TO AN ATTEMPT ON MY LIFE.
THAT SOUNDS ABOUT PAR FOR THE COURSE.
LOOK, COME WITH US TO ALCHEMAX. WE'LL QUESTION HIM THERE.
AND WHEN WE'RE NOT ALLOWED TO LEAVE?
OF COURSE YOU'LL BE ALLOWED TO LEAVE. YOU HAVE MY WORD.
FINE.

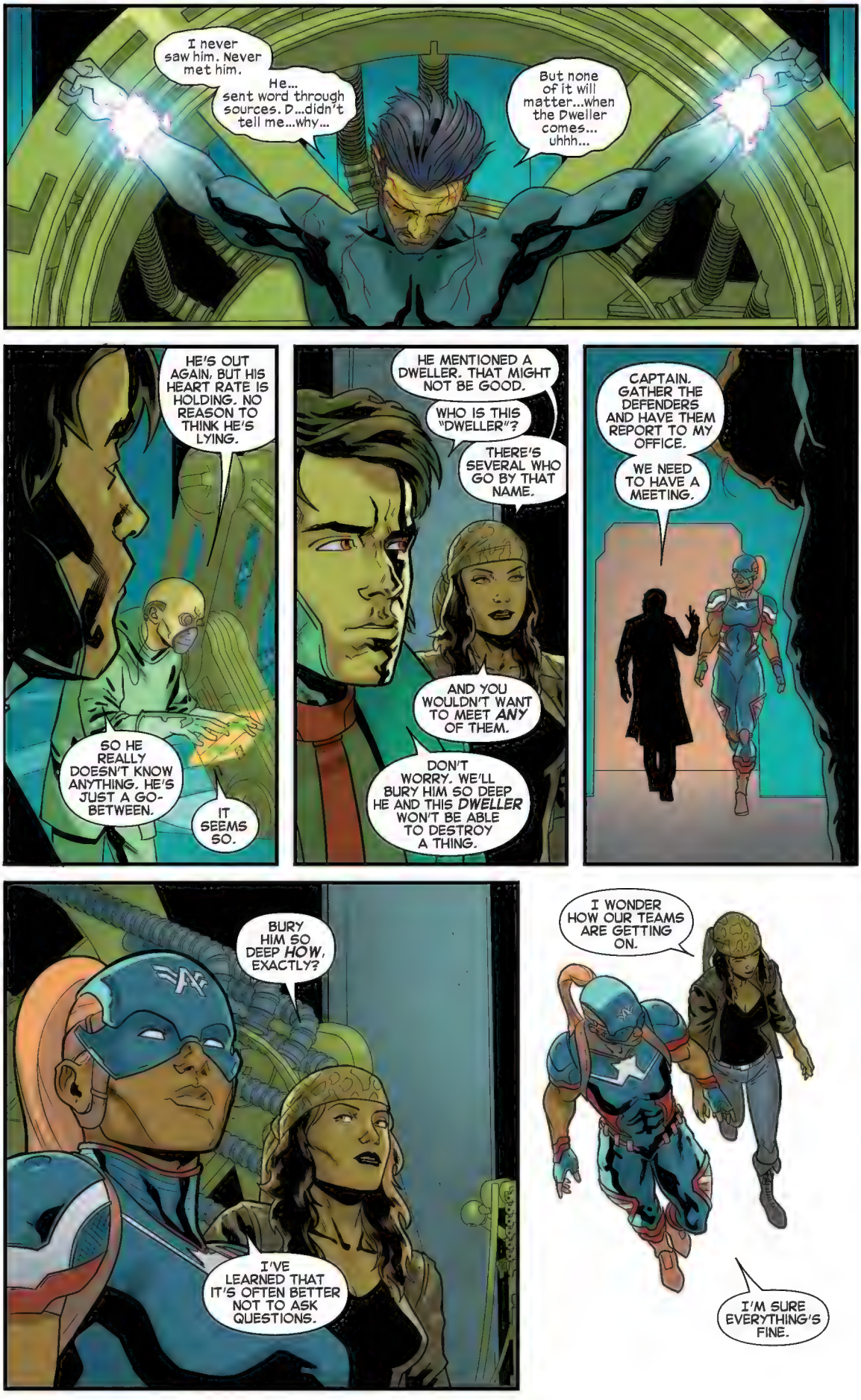
THE VISION WARNED ABOUT THIS.
WARNED ABOUT WHAT?
THEY DON'T SEEM DANGEROUS.
ABOUT THESE DEFENDERS. SHE SAID THEY WERE A DANGER.
TRUE DANGER NEVER DOES. THAT'S WHAT MAKES IT DANGEROUS.
SO WHAT ARE WE GOING TO DO?
WAIT FOR THEM TO MAKE THEIR MOVE, I SUPPOSE.
CAN'T SAY I'M ENAMORED WITH CAP'S LAISSEZ-FAIRE ATTITUDE.
SHE'S DOING WHAT SHE THINKS IS RIGHT. THAT'S ALL ANY OF US CAN EVER DO.
THAT REMINDS ME: DID YOU EAT SOME GUY?
STONE WAS SPEAKING TO YOU, HUH?
HE VOICED CONCERN. DID YOU?
YOU THINK I'M LITERALLY A BLACK WIDOW. I HAVE SEX AND THEN KILL AND EAT MY LOVER.
I THINK YOU HAVE YET TO ANSWER THE QUESTION.
THAT'S TRUE.
LET'S GO SEE HOW HARGOOD'S DOING.

HE'S REFUSING TO COOPERATE.
SO FAR, YES. AND HE TOOK OUT TWO OF OUR GUARDS.
I CAN'T SAY I LIKE STRAPPING HIM INTO THIS... DEVICE.
IRON MAN CREATED IT. HE ASSURES US IT'S QUITE SAFE. YOUR FRIEND WILL SUFFER NO LONG TERM DAMAGE.
YOU THINK YOU CAN SCARE ME?
YOU KNOW... NOTHING.
ZZZZZZZZZZZZZZ
YAAARRHHH!
I'M SORRY, I DIDN'T QUITE HEAR THAT.
I REALLY HATE THIS.
YOUR TEAMMATE WASNT THE ONE HE TRIED TO HAVE ASSASSINATED.
NOW, WHAT DO YOU KNOW ABOUT THE ASSAULT ON ONE ROBERTA MENDEZ?
YOU HAVE... NO IDEA...WHO YOU'RE DEALING WITH.

WHY DON'T YOU ENLIGHTEN US?
MY GRANDFATHER WAS KARL AMADEUS MORDO...
HE WAS A MYSTIC. HE WAS A SORCERER SUPREME.
HE WAS A GOD!
AND IF YOU THINK YOU CAN PERMANENTLY ENTRAP HIS DESCENDANT, THEN YOU ARE SADLY MISTAK--
EEEEeyyAAAARRRRRRRHHHHH
HE'S DEAD, SIR.
BRING HIM BACK TO LIFE AND LET'S START OVER.
HE DOESN'T GET AWAY THAT EASILY.


I THOUGHT YOU WERE RULER OF *NEW ATLANTIS*. HOW'D YOU WIND UP ON THIS CREW?
CIRCUMSTANCES.
THAT IT?
THAT IS IT.
CHATTY GUY, ISN'T HE?
OOOOOKAY.

WHY HIM?
EXCUSE ME?
I'M SORRY?
I SAID, WHY HIM?
MEANING WHY NOT YOU.
I AM A GOD. ONLY A GOD IS A SUITABLE MATE FOR A VALKYRIE.
WE'RE NOT EVEN THE SAME RELIGION.
THAT MEANS NOTHING IN THIS DAY AND AGE.
IF YOU CONTINUE THIS COURSE OF CONVERSATION, I WILL NOT BE RESPONSIBLE FOR MY ACTIONS. AND THIS TIME NOT EVEN THE SURFER WILL BE ABLE TO CONTAIN MY WRATH.
ACTUALLY, I WILL NOT EVEN TRY. IF YOU ARE THAT DETERMINED TO POUND ON EACH OTHER, I HAVE STOPPED CARING OVERMUCH.
THEN LET US FINISH WHAT WE STARTED.
YOU WILL HAVE NO ARGUMENT FROM ME.
AND THEN WHAT? THE WINNER WILL WIN ME AS A *PRIZE? LISTEN* TO THE TWO OF YOU!
YOU ARE BOTH BEING IDIOTIC.
BESIDES, IF THE TWO OF YOU POUND ON EACH OTHER, YOU COULD WIND UP TAKING DOWN THIS ENTIRE BUILDING! SOME HEROES YOU BOTH ARE.
YOU WANT TO SETTLE THIS? YOU SHOULD HAVE A *DRINKING* CONTEST!
OH, ODIN'S BEARD.


I never saw him. Never met him.
He... sent word through sources. D...didn't tell me...why...
But none of it will matter...when the Dweller comes... uhhh...
HE'S OUT AGAIN, BUT HIS HEART RATE IS HOLDING. NO REASON TO THINK HE'S LYING.
SO HE REALLY DOESN'T KNOW ANYTHING. HE'S JUST A GO-BETWEEN.
IT SEEMS SO.
HE MENTIONED A DWELLER. THAT MIGHT NOT BE GOOD.
WHO IS THIS "DWELLER"?
THERE'S SEVERAL WHO GO BY THAT NAME.
AND YOU WOULDN'T WANT TO MEET ANY OF THEM.
DON'T WORRY. WE'LL BURY HIM SO DEEP HE AND THIS DWELLER WON'T BE ABLE TO DESTROY A THING.
CAPTAIN. GATHER THE DEFENDERS AND HAVE THEM REPORT TO MY OFFICE.
WE NEED TO HAVE A MEETING.
BURY HIM SO DEEP HOW, EXACTLY?
I'VE LEARNED THAT IT'S OFTEN BETTER NOT TO ASK QUESTIONS.
I WONDER HOW OUR TEAMS ARE GETTING ON.
I'M SURE EVERYTHING'S FINE.

FOOL!
IT DOESN'T *LOOK* FINE.
IMBECILE!

DID YOU SERIOUSLY THINK YOU COULD *OUTDRINK* SOMEONE WHO LIVES UNDERWATER?
UNLESS YOU LIVE UNDER MEAD, THAT MEAD NOTHING! OUTDRINK A GOD? WHAT FOOLS THESE MORTALS BE!

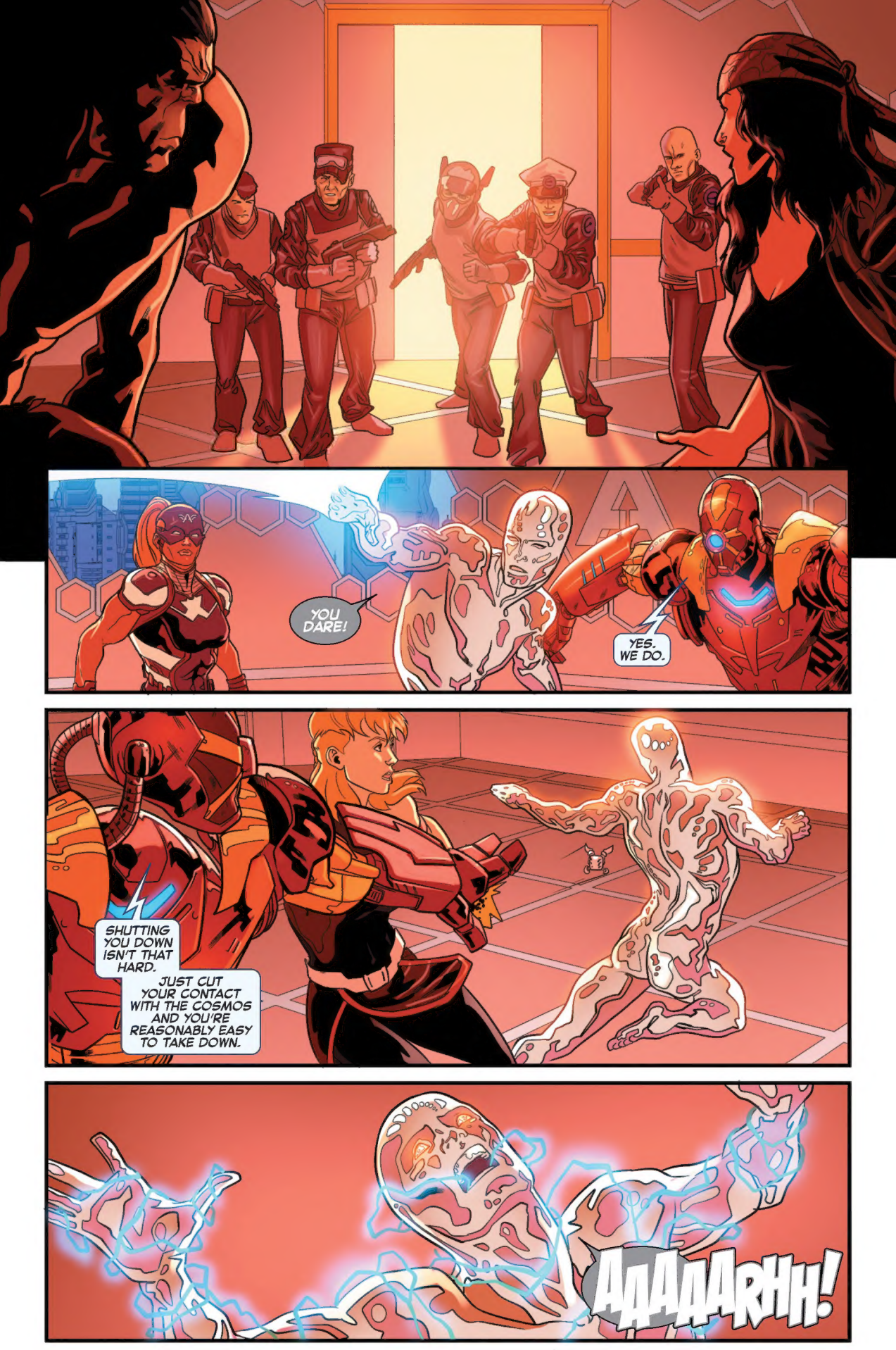
TO HADES WITH IT.
GLUG GLUG GLUG

DO I EVEN *WANT* TO KNOW?
IT WAS MY IDEA.
WHY AM I NOT SURPRISED?
OKAY, FINE. SHOCK IT. THE REST OF YOU, COME WITH ME. THEY'LL BE NO USE TO US.

MIGUEL AND I WILL NEED TO TALK ABOUT HERCULES' STATUS ON THE TEAM. *AGAIN.*
MORON.
CLOD.

SO, THE DEFENDERS. NICE NAME.
GLAD YOU LIKE IT. SOME PEOPLE TOOK ISSUE WITH IT.
AND YOU ARE THE LEADER, STRANGE?
WHEN ROMAN ISN'T AROUND TO CLAIM THE TITLE FOR HIMSELF.
WELL, STRANGE, IT IS MY HONOR TO OFFER YOU A POSITION WITH ALCHEMAX. WELCOME TO THE TEAM.
YOU'LL FIND WE HAVE QUITE THE EXCELLENT COMPENSATION PACKAGE. PLUS SUPERB BENEFITS, INCLUDING MEDICAL.
I KNOW THAT PEOPLE IN YOUR LINE OF WORK OFTENTIMES HAVE MUCH NEED OF MEDICAL, YES?
THAT'S KIND OF YOU, MR. STONE. BUT UNNECESSARY.
WE'RE NOT INTERESTED.
MAY I ASK WHY NOT?
WE'RE A DOWNTOWN GROUP. WE ALWAYS HAVE BEEN.
ALCHEMAX IS PURELY INTERESTED IN UPTOWN ACTIVITIES.
WELL, THAT IS WHERE THE MAJORITY OF ISSUES OCCUR, BUT--
AND OUR HEADQUARTERS IS IN THE HEART OF DOWNTOWN. IT'S WHERE WE'RE NEEDED. WE CANNOT RELOCATE HERE.
SO THANKS, BUT IT'S NOT HAPPENING.
YOU DON'T QUITE SEEM TO UNDERSTAND, STRANGE.
YOU DON'T HAVE AN OPTION HERE.
EXCUSE ME?

THE LAW IS QUITE CLEAR: ANYONE WHO IS A PRACTICING SUPER HERO MUST WORK FOR ALCHEMAX.
INDEPENDENT OPERATORS SIMPLY DO NOT EXIST IN OUR WORLD.
IF YOU ARE NOT AN ALCHEMAX EMPLOYEE, YOU ARE BY DEFINITION A SUPER VILLAIN.
NOW YOU DON'T SEEM THE VILLAINOUS TYPE TO ME.
SO, AGAIN: WELCOME TO ALCHEMAX.
I'M SURE YOU'LL BE VERY HAPPY HERE.
HULK. GET ROMAN.
WE'RE LEAVING.
NO. YOU'RE NOT.


YOU DARE!
YES. WE DO.
SHUTTING YOU DOWN ISN'T THAT HARD.
JUST CUT YOUR CONTACT WITH THE COSMOS AND YOU'RE REASONABLY EASY TO TAKE DOWN.
AAAAARHH!

VAL! HULK! HURRY!
I'LL KILL YOU!
HULK!
DAMMIT!
OH, YOU WANNA PLAY, HUH?
I'M GONNA ENJOY RIPPING YOU APART!

WHAT'RE YOU--
SHUNK!
OW! YOU BIT ME?! HOW DID YOU--?
WITH MY FANGS.
WHICH INJECT A PARALYTIC VENOM THAT NOT EVEN YOU CAN RESIST.
FIND THE OTHERS. LOCK THEM DOWN.
THE DEFENDERS ARE NOW OFFICIALLY ENEMIES OF THE STATE.
WUUMF
TO BE CONTINUED...

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